

remained for them to make the privilege a material face. Not until 1935 with the co-operation of Mr. Gardiner, of the Art School, and the Architectural Students was a suitable design adopted.

Of the more recent developments; of the formation of a Medical Graduate Association; of the publication of the "South African Journal of Medical Sciences; of the new constitution introduced by Mr. S. Kark and his followers, that led directly to the establishment of a Supply Association, to the Onderstepoort Conferences, the numerous cultural societies that have been

formed or of our recent association with the National Union of South African Students in their annual Conferences and research schemes, or again of our organised research on the health condition of Bantu School Children, little need be said. Suffice it to mention that these and many other ventures have been undertaken and brought to a fruitful wellbeing by the corporate efforts of a large body of enthusiastic students; that these new ventures are symptomatic of a new spirit of unity and social responsibility that is making itself felt in all spheres of our academic life.

The Students' Attitude to the Bantu Problem

RALPH E. BERNSTEIN.

It was not until comparatively recently that the Bantu peoples existed for the student as a problem. For many years no University provided the facilities for the study of these people except in connection with Bantu languages, nor was the student encouraged in any way to take an interest in Bantu problems. Within recent years, however, the founding of Departments of Social Science by the University authorities has done much to stimulate interest in sociological problems generally, and in the problems of culture and race contact in particular. Several student organisations have been interested enough to study and analyse the health and socio-economic conditions amongst the Bantu in urban locations and on the mines, and their conclusions have gone far to show that the coming generation has become conscious of the plight and impoverishment of the Bantu-speaking peoples. The student has come to realise that the Bantu are entitled to better housing conditions in the urban areas, more arable land, and a more understanding treatment. He finds himself in disagreement with our present political thought which holds that the correct tradition for the treatment of the Bantu in twentieth century South Africa must follow the lines of the early pioneers, because they *knew* how to deal with the "bloodthirsty savages" of their day. He realises that such out-moded beliefs cannot be reconciled with modern conditions; that European civilisation in South Africa to-day is, more than ever before, dependent for its very existence on an ample and cheap labour supply; that the prosperity of a country is dependent on the economic and cultural advancement of its poorer classes; and that

South African national welfare cannot be divorced from the welfare of the Bantu-speaking peoples.

The social attitude of the student towards the native has been analysed in experimental psychological studies by Prof. MacCrone and reported in his book, "Race Attitudes in South Africa." Groups of students were asked to express their own sentiment towards the native by checking a series of statements both favourable and unfavourable to the natives. The average reaction of the English-speaking students at Rhodes and Witwatersrand, and the Jewish group at Witwatersrand, bordered on a favourable attitude towards the native, while the Afrikaans-speaking groups from Witwatersrand and Potchefstroom Universities exhibited unfavourable and strongly unfavourable attitudes respectively. The same groups were also subjected to a "social distance" questionnaire, in which they were asked if they would willingly admit any; most; some; few; no members of different races regarded as a class (a) to their country; (b) to full citizenship; (c) to their University or profession; (d) to their home as personal friends; and (e) to close kinship by marriage. Here again the Afrikaans-speaking students proved to be strongly anti-native, while the other groups tended to be more tolerant towards the native; however, all groups agreed in showing a greater intolerance towards Asiatics, Cape Coloureds, and in most cases the Portuguese, than they exhibited towards the native. It was of interest to note that those who had been at University some time showed a more tolerant attitude towards the Bantu than did

first-year students, demonstrating the liberalising influence of a University education; this observation did not hold for the Potchefstroom students, who generally possessed a narrow outlook and were intolerant of all but their own group.

In 1934 the Medical School had a discussion regarding the advisability of training Non-Europeans as doctors; this was followed by a detailed questionnaire. It was found that the majority of students (265 out of 378) were in favour of such a scheme, though they stipulated separate lecture and laboratory facilities for Non-European students, that their training be confined to the Non-European hospitals, and that the Non-European practice be restricted to certain prescribed areas. In other words, the student, could he have his way, would go further than the Government's intended scheme of training native medical-aids for the territories. He would allow trained Bantu doctors to treat their fellow-men, for he realises that European doctors, unless the Government is prepared to assist them, cannot subsist in the territories. There was general agreement that the Bantu was himself best fitted to bring treatment and the principles of health to the huts of his own people, but it must be noted that the majority of students were not prepared to grant the Non-European doctor social equality in any form whatsoever.

It is interesting to trace the development of student opinion regarding health and socio-economic conditions amongst the Bantu from the pages of "The Leech." Prior to the questionnaire no student had submitted an article dealing with any aspect of the Bantu peoples, but subsequently many and varied articles have been published on this topic. The first contribution to "The Leech" dealing with the high incidence of disease amongst the Bantu came from the pen of Dr. A. Bloom, who dealt with "The Problem of Tuberculosis" in the issue for June, 1930. He pointed out that the steps that are being taken in the matter are very slight.

"For natives we have no accommodation at all. If they don't die in the Non-European Hospital they just go out and disseminate their bacilli amongst their friends until they die We have got a very big native population on the Witwatersrand, and it seems that it would be a reasonable idea to try to do something for these sufferers. It also seems reasonable to stop the wholesale distribution of bacilli which may infect not only the native, but the white."

It was not until November, 1933, that we heard anything more about the Bantu, when Dr. A. B. Xuma wrote on "Native Medical Practitioners,"

of which there were then about a dozen scattered throughout the country. They had all received their training either at the Scottish Universities or in America. A far cry from to-day when the Government is trying its utmost to encourage educated Bantu to take the medical course at Fort Hare, and when Dr. Anning has been training Non-Europeans to be his health assistants at Pietermaritzburg and Benoni.

A year later, in the issue for September, 1934, the first article by a student on Bantu problems was published in "The Leech." S. L. Kark, writing on the economic factor in the health of the South African Bantu, concluded that "The vast majority of the Bantu are living under unfavourable conditions in respect of diet, sanitation and dwellings. The main cause for this is poverty. Their ill-health can, to a great extent, be explained by poverty." This contribution coincided with the commencement of a new era in the Medical School, for but a few months previously the students had formed a society to study medical conditions amongst the Bantu.

It was not surprising therefore that the issue for October of the following year contained appeals by medical men from Rhodesia and Natal, and from the Inspector for Native Education, Transvaal, for the organised study of health and disease in the South African Bantu. Each contributor pointed out in almost identical terms our lack of knowledge, our utter ignorance of the incidence of disease in the Bantu, and indicated that the undergraduate could make tremendous advances in our knowledge of Bantu health conditions by conducting research investigations, which would not only provide him with training in scientific methods essential to his future work, but also with an understanding of native medical needs.

The following year brought a spate of articles dealing with miscellaneous subjects; the Bantu concept of disease, the medical services provided for the natives on the mines and in the territories, and the work carried out by native hospitals in different parts of the country. The growing interest in things Bantu reached a culminating point when the N.U.S.A.S. chose as the topic for the 1937 Conference "The Bantu Peoples." A summary of the discussions has already appeared in "The Leech" for September, 1937, and clearly indicates that student opinion from many University centres favours a more sympathetic treatment of Bantu problems and difficulties.

The conclusions to be drawn from these conferences, questionnaires, etc., are clear. The student, though he may not be prepared to accept

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the native as a social equal, realises the necessity for the economic advancement of the Native for the benefit of South African civilisation. However, it must be clearly pointed out that his is an objective liberalism—a liberalism in the abstract. Very few students can claim to have a first-hand knowledge of any aspect of Bantu conditions. They are merely expressing their unconscious attitude and the opinion of others which they feel represents the correct approach to be taken. Whether they are prepared to carry their convictions into effect still remains to be seen. And that is the challenge that is being thrown down to the coming generation.

Public opinion in South Africa to-day is in a state of flux—will it sink into its former narrow outlook or will it go forward on a broader, more rational basis? The Universities should be leading the way in showing us how misinformed we are on many topics and particularly with regard to the "Bantu Problem." A glorious opportunity is before the student to learn for himself

actually what the conditions amongst the natives are and to study how they can best be bettered. The budding teacher will find a study of the educational facilities and cultural achievement of the Bantu well worth the time spent; the student of sociology has an unique opportunity of studying the effect of culture-contact in the urban environment; while the student of medicine may study the influence of inadequate diet, insanitary housing and insufficient medical services on the health of the Bantu community.

And that is why the Medical School has every reason to be proud of what has so far been achieved in the investigation into the health of Bantu school-children on the Reef. The work done has been invaluable; furthermore, it has attracted attention in many parts of South Africa, and now our contemporaries at Capetown University are trying to emulate and better our idea with a similar investigation. At last the student can claim that he is achieving something tangible, and that is a beginning.



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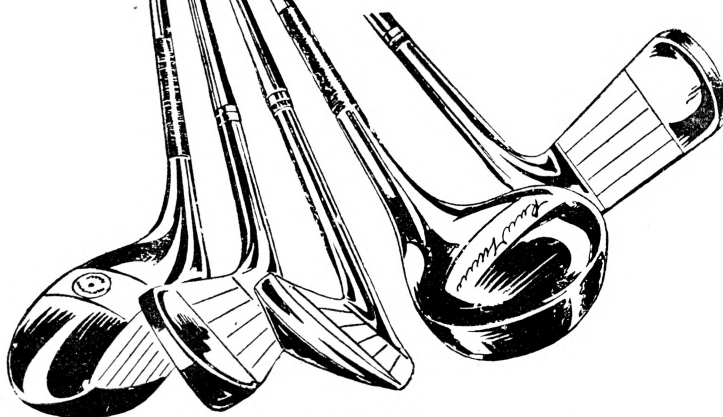
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